

VZCZCXRO1611
OO RUEHCI
DE RUEHKT #1152/01 3550931
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 210931Z DEC 09
FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1180
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 7244
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 7585
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 2929
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 5626
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 6722
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3397
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 4883
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2490
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 3770
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 001152

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/20/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL: STRIKE CONTINUES, MAOISTS MAY BACK DOWN

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i., Randy W. Berry. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Maoist-led strike continued for a second day, stopping virtually all vehicular traffic in the country. The December 21 demonstrations have been largely peaceful, although yesterday's protests turned violent in several areas, with one policeman seriously injured. A senior Maoist source told EmbOff that the party would likely cancel tomorrow's planned strike, while another publicly stated that the protests would continue. END SUMMARY.

Today's Protests Generally Peaceful

¶2. (SBU) The United Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist general strike ("bandh") continued for a second day on December 21. The Embassy is closed for normal business, although a few employees walked to work and emergency services were available. As of 1500 local time, the protests have been largely peaceful and even "festive." Maoist protesters at the intersection near the Embassy played cricket.

Damage at USAID Contractor Office

¶3. (SBU) A USAID-funded partner, Winrock International, reported on December 21 that vandals damaged one computer and destroyed files at their office in Surkhet, in the Mid-West region. The vandals -- whom we suspect to be Maoists -- reportedly questioned why the office was open during the strike.

Police Hurt in Incident on First Day of Strike

¶4. (SBU) During the first day of the strike (December 20), police and Maoist protesters clashed in several places around the country, most severely at New Baneshwor in Kathmandu. PM Nepal passed through New Baneshwor following his return from the Copenhagen climate change summit. Maoist protesters seriously injured one policeman, Deputy Superintendent Dilip Chaudhary. According to press reports, Chaudhary may have been targeted because of his role suppressing previous Maoist demonstrations. (Note: Post has not confirmed this report.) Maoist protesters reportedly vandalized one ambulance, private vehicles, and the office of the chief of Mahendra Bindeshwori Campus.

UN, NHRC Call for Restraint

15. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal (OHCHR) issued a press release on December 20 expressing "serious concern" about the violence and the use of "excessive force" by the police at New Baneshwor following the attack on its officer (statement emailed to SCA/INS). The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) urged the Maoists to call off the strike and restrain its activities.

Final Day of Strike Canceled?

16. (C) According to Maoist Central Committee member Krishna Bahardu Mahara, the Maoists are considering canceling the third day of protests, scheduled for December 22, as a "goodwill gesture." Mahara told EmbOff on the phone that the Maoist Central Committee would meet in the afternoon of December 21 to make a final decision on ending the strike. Mahara also strongly hinted that the party may allow Parliament to resume operations later this week. (Note: except for allowing the budget the pass, the Maoists have essentially blocked Parliament from functioning since May.) If the Maoists reopen Parliament, Mahara said it would be a "unilateral" decision to demonstrate their commitment to democracy. Despite Mahara's private comments, fellow Maoist leader Baburum Bhattarai said publicly December 21 that the protests would continue for the third day unless the other political parties addressed Maoist demands. (Comment: these conflicting statements may reflect divisions within the Maoist leadership on strategy. End Comment.)

No Talks for the Moment

KATHMANDU 00001152 002 OF 002

17. (SBU) Senior Nepali Congress and Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist-Leninist (UML) leaders told EmbOffs that the political talks between the Maoists and government remained bogged down, and that the three-party political "task force" was not scheduled to meet until December 26.

Comment

18. (C) Yesterday's violent clashes between the police and Maoists are disturbing, and demonstrate how quickly events can spiral out of control. Both sides appear of have stepped back for now, and reports that the Maoists will cancel the final day of the protests -- and perhaps reopen parliament -- are encouraging if true. The current round of protests underscores the importance of pressing the parties to resume serious dialogue and bringing Nepal's peace process to its conclusion.
BERRY